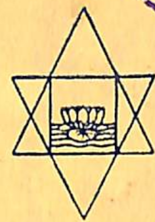
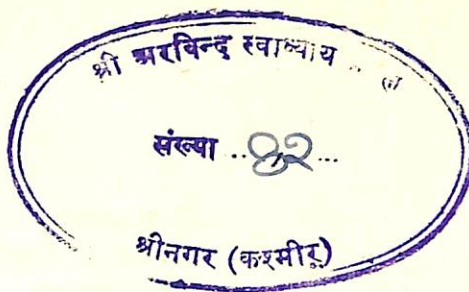


SRI AUROBINDO

POEMS

PAST AND PRESENT

POEMS PAST AND PRESENT

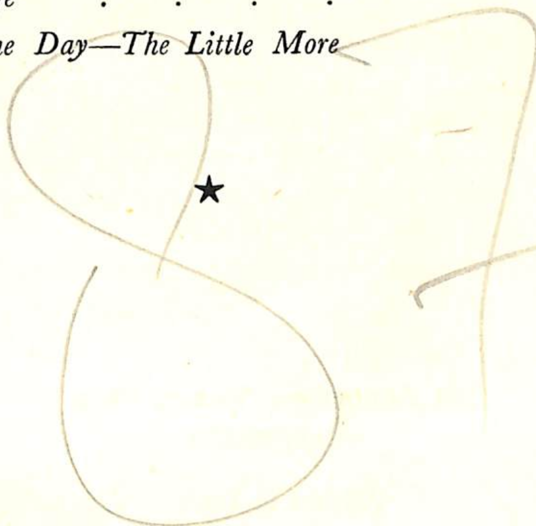


POEMS

Past & Present







Publishers :
Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

First Edition	...	1946
Second Edition	...	1952

Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press
Pondicherry

Printed in India

A-170/2/52/2,000

Publishers' Note

Of the eight poems that form this collection four were published in periodicals—*Bride of the Fire*, *The Blue Bird* and *Musa Spiritus* in the Advent of Madras (February and April 1946) and *A God's Labour* in the Second Number of the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay (April 1946). Three of the poems included here—*Life*, *Kamadeva* and *Heaven and Hell*—belong to an earlier period; the rest were written just before the last Great War (1939).

Musa Spiritus

O WORD concealed in the upper fire,
Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
Descend from thy rapt white desire,
Plunging through gold eternities.

Into the gulfs of our nature leap,
Voice of the spaces, call of the Light!
Break the seals of Matter's sleep,
Break the trance of the unseen height.

In the uncertain glow of human mind,
Its waste of unharmonied thronging thoughts,
Carve thy epic mountain-lined
Crowded with deep prophetic grots.

Let thy hue-winged lyrics hover like birds
Over the swirl of the heart's sea.
Touch into sight with thy fire-words
The blind indwelling deity.

O Muse of the Silence, the wideness make
In the unplumbed stillness that hears thy voice,
In the vast mute heavens of the spirit awake
Where thy eagles of Power flame and rejoice.

Out, out with the mind and its candle flares,
Light, light the suns that never die.
For my ear the cry of the seraph stars
And the forms of the Gods for my naked eye!

Let the little troubled life-god within
Cast his veils from the still soul,
His tiger-stripes of virtue and sin,
His clamour and glamour and thole and dole;

All make tranquil, all make free.
Let my heart-beats measure the footsteps of God
As He comes from His timeless infinity
To build in their rapture His burning abode.

Weave from my life His poem of days,
His calm pure dawns and His noons of force.
My acts for the grooves of His chariot-race,
My thoughts for the tramp of His great steeds'
course!

Bride of the Fire

BRIDE of the Fire, clasp me now close,—
    Bride of the Fire!
I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,
    I have slain desire.

Beauty of the Light, surround my life,—
    Beauty of the Light!
I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,
    I can bear thy delight.

Image of ecstasy, thrill and enlace,—
    Image of bliss!
I would see only thy marvellous face,
    Feel only thy kiss.

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart,—
    Call of the One!
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
    O living Sun.

The Blue Bird

I AM the bird of God in His blue;
    Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
    For the god's and the seraph's ear.

I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth
    Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
    Fire-seeds of ecstasy.

My pinions soar beyond Time and Space
    Into unfading Light;
I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face
    And the boon of the Spirit's sight.

I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;
    I have perched on Wisdom's tree
Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise
    By the streams of Eternity.

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
    My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
    My flight immortal will.

A God's Labour

I HAVE gathered my dreams in a silver air
 Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
 My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
 Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
 The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
 Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
 The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
 Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
 And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
 Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
 Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
    Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
    A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
    To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
    Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
    Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
    Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
    And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
    His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
    For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
    Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
    That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
    An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
"Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

"Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life's iron doom?

"This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god's desires?

"Come, let us slay him and end his course!
    Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
    And the curb of his wide white peace."

But the god is there in my mortal breast
    Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
    For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
    Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
    And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
    At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
    On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
    And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
    To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
    And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
    And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
    And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
    I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
    Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
    Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
    All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
    On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
    And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
    And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
    And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
    The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
    Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
    Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
    Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
    In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
    For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
    The living truth of you.

Hell and Heaven

IN the silence of the night-time,
In the grey and formless eve
When the thought is plagued with loveless
Memories that it cannot leave,

When the dawn makes sudden beauty
Of a peevish clouded sky,
And the rain is sobbing slowly
And the wind makes weird reply,

Always comes her face before me
And her voice is in my ear,
Beautiful and sad and cruel
With the azure eyes austere.

Cloudy figure once so luminous
With the light and life within
When the soul came rippling outwards
And the red lips laughed at sin,

Com'st thou with that marble visage
From what world instinct with pain
Where we pay the price of passion
By a law our hearts disdain?

Cast it from thee, O thou goddess!
    Earning with a smile release
From these sad imaginations,
    Rise into celestial peace.

Travel from the loveless places
    That our mortal fears create,
Where thy natural heavens claim thee
    And the gods, thy brothers, wait.

Then descend to me grown radiant,
    Lighting up terrestrial ground
With the feet that brighten heaven
    When the mighty dance goes round

And the high Gods beating measure
    Tread the maze that keeps the stars
Circling in their luminous orbits
    Through the eternal thoroughfares.

All below is but confusion
    Of desires that strive and cry,
Some forbidden, some achieving
    Anguish after ecstasy.

But above our radiant station
Is from which by doubt we fell,
Reaching only after Heaven
And achieving only Hell.

Let the heart be king and master,
Let the brain exult and toil,
Disbelieve in good and evil,
God with Nature reconcile.

Therefore, O rebellious sweetness,
Thou tookst arms for joy and love.
There achieve them! Take possession
Of our radiant seats above.

Kamadeva

WHEN in the heart of the valleys and hid by the roses
The sweet Love lies,
Has he wings to rise to his heavens or in the closes
Lives and dies?

On the peaks of the radiant mountains if we should meet
Proud and free, [him
Will he not frown on the valleys? Would it befit him
Chained to be?

Will you then speak of the one as a slave and a wanton,
The other too bare?
But God is the only slave and the only monarch
We declare.

It is God who is Love and a boy and a slave for our
He was made to serve; [passion
It is God who is free and proud and the limitless tyrant
Our souls deserve.

Life

MYSTIC Miracle, daughter of Delight,
 Life, thou ecstasy,
Let the radius of thy flight
 Be eternity.

On thy wings thou bearest high
 Glory and disdain,
Godhead and mortality,
 Ecstasy and pain.

Take me in thy wild embrace
 Without weak reserve
Body dire and unveiled face;
 Faint not, Life, nor swerve.

All thy bliss I would explore,
 All thy tyranny.
Cruel like the lion's roar,
 Sweet like springtide be.

Like a Titan I would take,
 Like a God enjoy,
Like a man contend and make,
 Revel like a boy.

More I will not ask of thee,
    Nor my fate would choose;
King or conquered let me be,
    Live or lose.

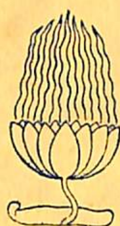
Even in rags I am a god;
    Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
    Long I live when slain.

One Day

The Little More

ONE day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.



Rs. 1-4-0